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Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 065789

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: NATO, MPOL, UK, MILI

SUBJECT: RAF GREENHAM COMMON

REF: (A) LONDON 03020 (DTG 231751Z FEB 78)
(B) LONDON 03571 (061456Z MAR 78)

1. FOLLOWING IS IN REPLY TO QUESTIONS REGARDING THE
SECRET

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REACTIVATION OF RAF GREENHAM COMMON (GC) CONTAINED IN MOD
UK LETTER FORWARDED BY REFTEL A. REFERENCES REFER
TO TEXT OF THE LETTER WITH ANSWERS PROVIDED IN SUB-
PARAGRAPHS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING.

2. REF PARA 4: WHAT OTHER POSSIBLE LOCATIONS WERE CON-
SIDERED AND REJECTED?

A. THE AIR FORCE CONSIDERED BRIZE-NORTON, FAIRFORD,
WETHERSFIELD AND SCULTHORPE AS POSSIBLE LOCATIONS FOR

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ADDITIONAL TANKERS.

(1) BRIZE-NORTON WAS IDENTIFIED AS A GOOD SOLUTION IF BASING RIGHTS COULD BE OBTAINED. THE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF FACILITIES WERE CONSIDERED TO BE THE BEST IN THE UK FOR KC-135 SUPPORT. IT WAS REJECTED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT SINCE THE UK MADE FULL TIME USE OF THE BASE, GRANTING OF PEACETIME AND WARTIME BEDDOWN RIGHTS FOR THE ADDITIONAL TANKERS WAS UNLIKELY. HOWEVER, IF JOINT USE RIGHTS FOR THE KC-135 DETACHMENT COULD BE NEGOTIATED, BRIZE-NORTON WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT ALTERNATIVE TO GC.

(2) FAIRFORD OFFERED THE BEST OPERATIONAL ALTERNATIVE AFTER BRIZE-NORTON AND APPEARED TO BE THE MOST FEASIBLE AS A SECOND CHOICE. HOWEVER, IT WOULD COST CONSIDERABLY MORE TIME AND MONEY THAN GC. A ONE TO TWO YEAR DELAY IS ESTIMATED TO PREPARE FACILITIES FOR THE KC-135S AND AT A COST OF $24 MILLION TO PROVIDE GC EQUIVALENCY. AT LEAST $18 MILLION WOULD BE REQUIRED TO ESTABLISH THE TANKERS AT FAIRFORD. REHABILITATION OF THE FUELS SYSTEM, PAVING, DORMITORIES, AND PERSONNEL SUPPORT FACILITIES WOULD BE REQUIRED. NEW CONSTRUCTION

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WOULD BE NEEDED FOR DEPENDENT SUPPORT FACILITIES. THE LACK OF AIR SPACE CONGESTION AND FLIGHT RESTRICTIONS WOULD MAKE FAIRFORD A SOUND OPERATIONAL BASE. HOWEVER, OVERRIDING TIME AND ECONOMIC FACTORS SUPPORTED THE SELECTION OF GC.

(3) THE MAJOR DRAWBACK AT SCULTHORPE IS THE LACK OF FACILITIES. EXTENSIVE EXPANSION OF THE FUEL HYDRANT AND STORAGE SYSTEM WOULD BE REQUIRED. LAND ACQUISITION WOULD BE REQUIRED TO EXTEND THE RUNWAY TO 10,000 FEET AND PROVIDE 1,000 FOOT OVERRUNS ON BOTH ENDS FOR TANKER OPERATIONS. THESE AND RELATED PERSONNEL/DEPENDENT FACILITIES COSTS PUSH SCULTHORPE ESTIMATES HIGHER THAN THE COSTS FOR FAIRFORD TO REACTIVATE THE BASE FOR TANKERS. FYI: FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF SCULTHORPE WOULD BE APPROPRIATE IF AN ADDITIONAL FIGHTER BASE WERE REQUIRED. END FYI.

(4) WETHERSFIELD ALSO OFFERED A POSSIBLE LOCATION.

HOWEVER, THE RUNWAY AND TAXIWAYS LOAD BEARING CAPACITY WILL NOT SUPPORT TANKER OPERATIONS, AND THE RUNWAY AND OVERRUNS WOULD HAVE TO BE EXTENDED. BECAUSE OF THESE LIMITATIONS, WETHERSFIELD WAS NOT CONSIDERED FURTHER. A MORE DETAILED SURVEY WOULD BE REQUIRED TO ASSESS THE COSTS OF INTRODUCING TANKERS AT WETHERSFIELD, BUT A CORRESPONDINGLY HIGH COST WOULD BE EXPECTED.

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(5) IN SUMMARY, GC WAS SELECTED AS THE PREFERRED BASE FOR REACTIVATION BECAUSE IT WOULD COST $18-24 MILLION LESS THAN FAIRFORD AND THE FACILITY WOULD BE AVAILABLE ONE TO TWO YEARS SOONER. BRIZE-NORTON REMAINS AN EXCELLENT ALTERNATIVE IF JOINT USE RIGHTS CAN BE NEGOTIATED.

3. REF PARA 5(A): WHAT WOULD BE THE PLANNED WARTIME
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ROLE OF GC? WILL IT INVOLVE PEACETIME DEPLOYMENTS? CAN YOU CONFIRM UNDERSTANDING THAT F-111 AIRCRAFT PREVIOUSLY PLANNED TO DEPLOY THERE IN WAR WOULD NO LONGER DO SO AND THAT PROPOSED AIRCRAFT SHELTERS WOULD NOT BE NEEDED?

A. THE PLANNED WARTIME ROLE FOR GC WOULD BE TO RECEIVE AND OPERATIONALLY EMPLOY ADDITIONAL TANKER AIR-CRAFT. ONLY TRANSIT SUPPORT AIRCRAFT AND POSSIBLY OTHER AIRCRAFT ENCOUNTERING EMERGENCIES WOULD USE THE FACILITY IN ADDITION TO THE TANKER MISSION.

B. NORMAL PEACETIME OPERATIONS OF THE TANKER DETACHMENT ARE THE ONLY OPERATIONS CONTEMPLATED AT GC. SHOULD THE TANKERS BE BASED ELSEWHERE, PERIODIC EXERCISE RIGHTS WOULD BE REQUESTED FOR THE TYPE OF AIRCRAFT SCHEDULED TO DEPLOY TO GC IN WARTIME. THIS IS IN CON-SONANCE WITH EFFORTS TO ENHANCE COMBAT READINESS BY EXERCISING UNITS AT DEPLOYMENT BASES.

C. AS GC IS PLANNED TO BE USED EXCLUSIVELY FOR TANKER OPERATIONS, THE F-111S WOULD NO LONGER BE SCHEDULED FOR THAT FACILITY AND THE SHELTERS WOULD BE REPROGRAMMED ELSEWHERE.

4. REF PARA 5(B): DOES THE PLAN TO INTRODUCE A-10S AT BENTWATERS/WOODBRIDGE ALTER THE FIGURE OF 78 IN YOUR LETTER OF 19 JANUARY 1978?

A. YES. THE EXPANSION OF IN-PLACE AIR REFUELABLE FIGHTER AIRCRAFT IN EUROPE BY A TOTAL OF 78 CITED IN THE 19 JANUARY LETTER DID NOT INCLUDE THE A-10S. THE 108 A-10S WILL REPLACE 66 PHANTOMS AND INCREASE THE 78 FIGURE BY 42 TO A REVISED TOTAL OF 120 AIR REFUELABLE
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AIRCRAFT.

5. REF PARA 5(C): WHAT IS MEANT BY QUOTE TEMPORARY UNQUOTE IN LINE 4, SUBPARA QUOTE C UNQUOTE? WHAT IS

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THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TASKS OF GC TANKERS AND THOSE AT MILDENHALL?

A. QUOTE TEMPORARY UNQUOTE APPLIES TO THE AIRCRAFT, FLIGHT CREWS AND AIRCRAFT CREW CHIEFS (GROUND MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR SPECIFIC AIRCRAFT) WHO ARE TEMPORARILY ASSIGNED DUTIES AWAY FROM THEIR PERMANENT BASE IN THE US. ONE TEMPORARY ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT AND ITS ASSIGNED CREW WOULD REPLACE ANOTHER AT GC EVERY 42-45 DAYS. THE NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT WOULD REMAIN APPROXIMATELY THE SAME. ONLY THE 15 AIRCRAFT AND 90 TEMPORARY

PERSONNEL WOULD ROTATE. THIS IS IDENTICAL TO THE PEACE-TIME CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS CURRENTLY EMPLOYED AT MILDENHALL.

B. BOTH UNITS WOULD BE DETACHMENTS OF THE 306 STRATEGIC WING AND THEIR MISSIONS WOULD BE IDENTICAL.

6. REF PARA 5(D): IF GC IS REACTIVATED, WILL ANOTHER STAND-BY BASE BE NEEDED?

A. THE AIR FORCE HAS NOT IDENTIFIED A REQUIREMENT FOR AN ADDITIONAL STAND-BY BASE. HOWEVER, SUCH A POSSIBILITY CANNOT BE RULED OUT AS WE STRUCTURE EUROPEAN OPERATIONS TO MEET A CHANGING THREAT.

7. REF PARA 5(E): IS ANY LATER (I.E., POST KC-135) DEVELOPMENT ENVISAGED FOR GC?

A. THERE ARE NO PLANS FOR ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT GC AT THIS TIME.

8. REF PARA 6: CONSIDERING THE LOCAL AREA AND THE ALDERMASTON ATOMIC WEAPONS RESEARCH ESTABLISHMENT, ARE YOU ABLE TO LET US HAVE ANY INFORMATION ABOUT THE AIRCRAFT, ITS BEHAVIOR, OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND ROUTING, AND FLIGHT SAFETY RECORD?

A. EASEMENT THROUGH THE PROHIBITED AIR SPACE OVER THE ALDERMASTON ESTABLISHMENT WILL REQUIRE SPECIAL CON-SIDERATION. HOWEVER, IT WAS PERMITTED PRIOR TO DEACTIVATION OF THE BASE. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT A COMPARABLE SITUATION EXISTS ON THE APPROACHES TO RAF ABINGDON WHERE AIRCRAFT ON INSTRUMENT APPROACHES TO THE NORTH ARE ALLOWED TO OVERFLY THE HARWELL ESTABLISHMENT.

B. WE ARE AWARE OF EXTENSIVE AIR TRAFFIC IN THE GC AREA. HOWEVER, DURING PAST F-111 DEPLOYMENTS, WHILE THE RUNWAY AT UPPER HEYFORD WAS REPAIRED, WE FOUND THAT THE RAF MILITARY AIR TRAFFIC ORGANIZATION, LONDON AIR

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TRAFFIC CONTROL,AND OTHER AGENCIES WERE VERY COOPERATIVE
IN INTEGRATING GC TRAFFIC INTO THEIR SYSTEM.

C. THE SAFETY RECORD OF THE KC-135 IS ONE OF THE
BEST. PROCEDURES, TRAINING, AND THE CONCEPT OF
OEPRATIONS ARE OPTIMIZED TO KEEP THIS ONE OF OUR
SAFEST AIRCRAFT.

9. REF PARA 7(A): IS IT POSSIBLE TO REFINE THE NUMBER
OF US PERSONNEL INVOLVED? HOW MANY OFF-BASE HOUSING

UNITS WOULD BE REQUIRED?

A. UPDATED ESTIMATES INDICATE THAT APPROXIMATELY
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1195 US MILITARY PERSONNEL WOULD BE STATIONED AT GC.
THEY WOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY APPROXIMATELY 2,055
DEPENDENTS.

B. WE ESTIMATE THAT APPROXIMATELY 700 OFF-BASE
RENTAL HOUSING UNITS WOULD BE REQUIRED.

10. REF PARA 7(B): WHAT SCALE OF BUILDING IS ENVISAGED
ON THE BASE?

A. WE HAVE IDENTIFIED THE REQUIREMENT FOR $6
MILLION TO REPAIR AND ALTER EXISTING FACILITIES FOR THE
INITIAL OPERATION OF FIVE AIRCRAFT. OTHER CONSTRUCTION,
SUCH AS A SCHOOL, MAY BE NEEDED IN THE LONG TERM --
INITIAL ESTIMATE FOR THESE FACILITIES IS $8 MILLION. A
MORE DETAILED SURVEY WILL BE REQUIRED TO COMMENT FURTHER.

11. REF PARA 7(C): HOW MANY CIVILIAN JOBS WOULD BE
CREATED ON THE BASE?

A. WE ESTIMATE THAT ABOUT 180 ADDITIONAL CIVILIAN
JOBS WOULD BE PROVIDED ON THE BASE. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE
THAT MANY MORE JOBS WOULD PROBABLY BE CREATED IN THE
LOCAL COMMUNITY AS A RESULT OF THE INCREASE IN PERSONNEL
AND THEIR NEED FOR LOCAL GOODS AND SERVICES AS WELL AS
INCREASED PUBLIC WORKS SUPPORT.

12. REF PARA 7(D): COULD YOU PROVIDE A QUOTE NOISE
FOOT PRINT UNQUOTE TOGETHER WITH DETAILS OF PERFORMANCE
AND NOISE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KC-135 ON TAKE-OFF AND
LANDING, WHILE IN THE CIRCUIT, AND DETAILS OF FLIGHT-
PATHS OVER SURROUNDING AREAS?

A. AT THIS TIME, WE DO NOT HAVE A NOISE FOOT
PRINT AVAILABLE FOR THE KC-135. PRELIMINARY NOISE DATA,
BASED ON DISTANCE AND HEIGHT FROM THE FLIGHT PATH,ARE

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BEING DEVELOPED AND WILL BE FURNISHED IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THE FOOT PRINT IS DEPENDENT TO A LARGE DEGREE ON ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE PROCEDURES.

B. ARRIVAL, DEPARTURE AND TRAFFIC PATTERN PROCEDURES FOR THE KC-135 AT GC ARE NOT FULLY DEVELOPED. A DETAILED SURVEY OF THE AREA AND COORDINATION WITH BRITISH AIR TRAFFIC AUTHORITIES WOULD BE REQUIRED TO FULLY INTEGRATE KC-135 PROCEDURES AT GC.

13. REF PARA 7(E): WILL LAND PURCHASE BE REQUIRED NOW OR IN THE FUTURE?

A. A REQUIREMENT FOR ADDITIONAL LAND HAS NOT BEEN IDENTIFIED.

14. ANSWERS TO THE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FORWARDED BY REFTEL B ARE BEING PREPARED AND WILL BE PROVIDED SHORTLY.

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